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# IMMIGRATION



BY

THEODORE MARBURG

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## IMMIGRATION

Abundance of good land makes for the happiness and prosperity of the whole people.

In the Far West a generation ago there was no poverty. Few men in that region had accumulated great riches; but the quantity of good land available at reasonable prices caused an utter absence of the submerged class—the class engaged in an unequal struggle with poverty. In the more thickly settled Eastern States this class had long since appeared, and across the water in the crowded countries of Europe it had for generations paraded itself at every turn, taking away much

of the charm of the cultured surroundings and mixing something bitter in his cup of joy for the thoughtful traveler. Abundance of land spells opportunity in larger measure than abundance of any other kind of economic wealth. Other forms of capital mean opportunity, too; but only for the man who already has something. Their increase seems to do little for the very poor.

The dweller in the city who finds himself thrown out of work by change of industrial method or new invention, by business crises, or by being worsted in the struggle with his fellows, finds his condition less desperate if there is cheap and fertile land to which to turn.

Does the present practice of the United States in respect to admitting a million foreign immigrants a year recognize sufficiently this principle?

The land speculator, steamship and transportation interests, the men ab-

sorbed in or laying stress upon economic activity to the exclusion of higher activities, all want as many immigrants as can be induced to come to us. Some speakers and writers capitalize the earning power of each immigrant and tell us that the country is by so much better off for his coming.

If numbers are what constitute a truly great people and cause them to live in history, by all means persist in the present policy, because the great growth of population in the United States comes from the large families of immigrants in the first and second generations. But if there are other elements of more importance than numbers, then we may well inquire whether the tide of immigration which was so useful to us in our earlier days is now an advantage or a potential disadvantage.

Rapid growth of population, of course, means money-making. But is



not this very concentration of our people on money-making a source of evil, leading to neglect of politics and government, luxurious and demoralizing indulgence and neglect of the mental and spiritual in life? And if we hasten the advent of the day when our country shall be overcrowded, are we not throwing away the inheritance of our children, are we not bringing measurably nearer the grave social problems which confront Europe?

Is it fair to ourselves or to the world to subject our institutions to this strain any sooner than is absolutely necessary? Our system of local self-government makes it possible to govern what is practically an empire in extent under republican forms. But thus far the experiment has been made with a prosperous and fairly contented people. Let congestion take place, with the stress of poverty and suffering that must inevitably follow despite all our modern

devices and philanthropy, and democracy must gird itself for a supreme test. The Civil War was a political test; the social test has not yet come.

If it is urged that a liberal humanity dictates that our shores should continue to be the "refuge for the oppressed of all nations," a sufficient answer is that an enlightened and progressive nation serves the world best by a due regard for its own interests.

The successful conduct of a democratic form of government in the United States has had a liberalizing influence on the political organization of the whole world. Today every government of the two Americas, every government of Europe, and several Asiatic governments are modeled on the lines either of the English Government or of our own; and our example has reflected back even upon England whence we originally drew our inspiration. The spread of the franchise

in England and the growth of social as well as political democracy there have been unquestionably stimulated by their successful practice here. We therefore owe it to the world to continue to make this experiment successful.

If shutting out immigrants seems unfair, it is unfair in a bigger way to permit the overcrowding which will place a strain upon our institutions.

The advantages of slower growth will be manifold. The older the Government, the deeper will it become rooted in the affections of the people. The slower the change of conditions we are compelled to meet, the greater will be the opportunity to accommodate ourselves to such change and to do it successfully.

We have a right to exercise a choice not only in the character and health of the individuals we admit but in the races we admit. It might be well to



try, for a generation at least, the experiment of limiting the numbers of immigrants, declaring definitely how many we will receive from each of the European peoples, and giving a decided preference to the hardy northern blood.

It will be said that certain sections of the country, like our own South, need immigrants. This is quite true; and the social side—the side of getting the mass of the people on the land of the right race and blood—is of far more importance to the South than the economic side. It is from the farm that the blood of the cities is regenerated; it is from the farm that come so many boys who rise to eminence in the professions, in politics and in business. But how many foreign immigrants go south of the Mason and Dixon line? Less than five per cent. Settlers in the South come from other sections of the country. They will

continue to come, in increasing numbers, as the advantages of the South become better known, and more especially as nuclei of white men are established at different farming centers to give the requisite social background without which the newcomer will not stay.

Moreover, there is no section of the country today more interested than the South in the preservation of our institutions, and no section which in the future may be more liberally drawn upon for their upbuilding in the original spirit.

Few regions of the world display such an expanse of fertile soil as the United States. If it is not absorbed by increase of population, our people are bound to be diverted to it from factory and shop. And in the long run we will be a better and sturdier race if the preponderant

growth of cities is checked, if fewer people are crowded into factories and a larger proportion remain on the land.

What use is there in multiplying a population if you are going to subject vast numbers to a life in factory and mine? It is not by growth in numbers that the world is moved forward, but by growth in kind. Ever a higher type living under conditions of greater social justice: that is an aim worth striving for.



